News Release

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Brew Your Business Celebrates First Anniversary with Yellowstone River Beef

Williston, ND – Brew Your Business Williston (BYB) marked its first anniversary on Wednesday, January 8, with a celebration at Williston State College. Attendees enjoyed complimentary coffee, cupcakes, networking bingo, and a behind-the-scenes look at the meat processing industry.

Founded in late 2023 by volunteers from Williston Economic Development, Tri-County Regional Development Council, the Williston Area Chamber of Commerce, the Small Business Development Center, and the North Dakota Women's Business Center, BYB held its inaugural meeting in January 2024. The anniversary event showcased Calli Thorne and Luke Taylor, co-owners of Yellowstone River Beef (YRB), along with co-owner CJ Thorne, who was also present to answer questions. Anna Nelson, the executive director of Williston Economic Development, led the discussion.

The Thorne and Taylor families purchased YRB in fall 2024, and when they sought financing, they found support through the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives' (NDAREC) Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MILP). This program, which offers low-interest loans funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant, is designed to enhance the quality of life in rural areas.

"The (original) business looked a lot different from what we do now. When we took over, there was a building, employees, and a little bit of business," said Luke Taylor. "For financing, we worked with Keith Olson (Small Business Development Center regional director) on the business plan and discovered the MILP program. We were the first-ever business to borrow money from them. It made a lot of sense for us."

Calli Thorne emphasized the significance of the program. “It was pretty unique that MILP lined up for us, offering a lower interest loan. That made a big difference for us,” she said.

Yellowstone River Beef provides USDA-certified beef sourced from North Dakota and Montana, with much of the meat coming from the Thorne family’s Triangle M Ranch and Feedlot in Watford City. YRB operates a retail section, open Monday through Friday, where customers can purchase anything from a single ribeye steak to a 40-foot container of custom-cut beef.

Looking to the future, YRB plans to expand its offerings to include jerky, sausage, snack sticks, and more. The company has already purchased a state-of-the-art smoker and is currently searching for the right employee to manage that part of their operation.

For those who missed the anniversary event, the full Q&A session is available online at this link.

BYB meets monthly and is open to anyone interested in supporting local entrepreneurs and small businesses. The meetings provide a space for entrepreneurs, business owners, lenders, and resource providers to network, learn, and grow. High school and college students are also encouraged to attend.

The next BYB meeting will be held on February 12 at 9 a.m. at the Teton Lounge, Williston State College. All are welcome to attend.